

The Department of Commerce (DOC), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS-NOAA Fisheries) is issuing a Broad Agency Announcement to solicit Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*) tagging proposals addressing two levels of implementation, as described in the announcement. A number of contracts will be issued as a result of this solicitation. A website has been established to provide public access to the BAA package at <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov>. Interested parties may access the announcement from this page. Questions regarding proposal submission may be addressed via e-mail to Michelle.R.Morales@noaa.gov and shall reference this announcement. All tagging proposals to be considered under this solicitation must be received by 4:30 p.m. EDT, on **September 13, 2002**. Postmarks will not be sufficient. Facsimile submission will not be accepted. Offerors are advised that only Contracting Officers are legally authorized to commit the Government to an award under this announcement. Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Minority Institutions (MIs) are encouraged to apply. Questions on the objectives or preparation of research proposals should be addressed to Nick Anderson at (978) 281-9383 or nick.anderson@noaa.gov. Questions related to contracting or cost issues should be directed to the Eastern Administrative Support Center, Attention: Michelle Morales at Michelle.R.Morales@noaa.gov.

BROAD AGENCY ANNOUNCEMENT (BAA EASC 02-0002)

COOPERATIVE RESEARCH PARTNERS INITIATIVE

*Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*) Tagging Program*

A. INTRODUCTION: The National Marine Fisheries Service's (NOAA Fisheries) Northeast Regional Office (NER), Cooperative Research Partners Initiative (CRPI) is seeking interested parties to implement an Atlantic cod (*Gadus morhua*) tagging program. The CRPI initiative is a program involving cooperation between members of the fishing industry and scientists. This BAA is issued under the provisions of paragraph 6.102(d)(2) of the Federal Acquisition Regulation (FAR) which provides for the competitive selection of basic and applied research proposals. Contracts awarded based on responses to this BAA are considered to be the result of full and open competition and in full compliance with the provisions of Public Law 98-396, "The Competition in Contracting Act of 1984." A web site has been established at <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov> to provide public access to the BAA package. A new BAA may be posted following expiration of this submittal period in support of any additional or continuing agency needs.

B. BACKGROUND: There is interest in obtaining more knowledge and a better understanding of the distribution and movement patterns of Atlantic cod in both inshore and offshore waters in the Gulf of Maine, Georges Bank, Southern New England areas. Currently, a number of independent and uncoordinated tagging programs are being conducted in localized areas with varied objectives. The CRPI cod tagging program aims to: 1) improve coordination of existing cod tagging projects, 2) integrate localized tagging operations into a regional program, and 3) coalesce the varied existing cod tagging research hypotheses into a scientifically coherent research program. The goal of this initiative is to develop a region-wide collaborative cod tagging program that includes the active participation and involvement of fishermen, scientists and other interested parties. This program will improve our understanding cod movement patterns, as well as provide new information on cod essential habitat, and fish behavior, with the ultimate goal of expanding the information base for management of Atlantic cod.

In early 2001, the New England Aquarium (NEA) was contracted by the NOAA Fisheries CRPI Program to conduct a series of workshops with fishermen and scientists within fishing communities in the Northeast Region. The objectives of these workshops were to: 1) discuss and document issues surrounding Atlantic cod distribution and movements, and determine if there are multiple cod stocks throughout New England and Southern Canada; 2) discuss means to assess cod movements, i.e., in and out of closed areas or nearshore/offshore areas, using various tagging techniques; 3) bring fishermen's unique experience and expertise more directly into the science and management arena; 4) determine ways to develop research partnerships among fishery participants, marine scientists and fisheries managers; and 5) encourage fishermen to participate in this research forum and to facilitate use of their vessels as research platforms.

Some specific research topics discussed at these meetings included:

- Are there multiple cod stocks throughout New England and Southern Canadian waters?
- Do they undergo movement patterns between areas on a seasonal basis or other cyclical basis?
- What is the rate of exchange among these areas?
- What options should be considered for research methods, i.e., types and number of tags to deploy, size of fish to tag, primary and secondary areas for tagging, and outreach/information management including research information dissemination systems?

Though these research topics were generally discussed at many of the NEA's port meetings, they do not represent the totality of cod tagging topics discussed or potential cooperative research needs. You are encouraged to review the NEA's report (Recommendations for Conducting a Collaborative Cod-Tagging Program for New England and Maritime Canada) which can be accessed on the Northeast Regional Office web page <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/neaquabook.pdf> or request a copy from Nick Anderson at (978) 281-9383 or nick.anderson@noaa.gov

C. OBJECTIVE:

(1) Technical Description: This BAA solicits proposals to address overall cod tagging program implementation which includes a number of elements. An initial two (2) year phase of this program is envisioned.

Deploy tags in areas outside current tagging programs. Five (5) specific areas for tagging under this solicitation have been identified:

- Cashes Ledge and Fippennies Ledge
- Mount Desert Island out to Brown's Bank (essentially the eastern Gulf of Maine)
- Cape Cod / Chatham area and Great South Channel
- Georges Bank and the Northeast Peak
- Nantucket Shoals and Coxes Ledge area.

Note: Certain areas will require coordination with Canadian Department of Fisheries and Oceans

A minimum of five-thousand (5,000) T-bar tags (Floy spaghetti tags) shall be deployed in each of the five areas. Training, equipping, and coordination of local fishery participants will be carried out by up to five (5) entities, each focused on one or more tagging areas as described above.

An effective outreach program targeting local fishing communities or fishing organizations is essential. This component will be a single entity that will coordinate the local tagging organizations selected under this BAA, plan and implement outreach efforts designed to maximize tag returns, and organize tagging data and information dissemination. The Northeast Fisheries Science Center in Woods Hole, MA. will oversee and provide guidance to this entity.

To encourage broad-based participation in this cod tagging effort, CRPI is seeking proposals for the above two components from commercial and recreational fishing individuals, organizations, cooperatives, aquaria, marine research institutes, State marine resource agencies, conservation organizations, or other entities having close contact with commercial and recreational fishing communities. In order to articulate how these programs “leverage” with State and local resources, proposals should identify how existing organizational structure, memberships, partnerships, or other collaborations will assist in conducting the research. (See Section E. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA)

Two levels of proposals will be considered for funding under contracts:

Level 1:

Level one proposals address the local tagging infrastructure needed to conduct the actual tagging operations including, but not limited to, recruiting and training fishermen to handle and tag cod while minimizing mortality, initial data gathering and management, and to assist with local outreach efforts including coordination with other local cod tagging efforts and integration of data from these efforts with data from the CRPI initiative when practical. Up to five (5) groups or entities shall be funded up to a two-year (twenty four months) period. Proposals may address one or more areas targeted for tagging, as described above.

Level 2:

Level two proposals address the central coordination/outreach entity. A single group or organization shall be funded for up to a two-year (twenty four months) period. The funded entity shall serve as the interface among the Level 1 groups, the Northeast Fisheries Science Center (NEFSC), and the CRPI Program. In addition, outreach and coordination efforts will be required to ensure proper integration of data from Level 1 groups as well as other tagging efforts such as those conducted by the University of Massachusetts at Dartmouth, University of New Hampshire, Canadian DFO, and others as appropriate. A high level of project coordination, communication, and logistical support will be required to ensure program consistency. Additionally, data processing, quality assurance, and information management/dissemination will be required. Ultimately, it will be the goal of the Level 2 contractor to provide outreach support, as well as ensure the timely, accurate and properly formatted delivery of tag data to the NMFS.

Groups or organizations may submit a single proposal that covers one or two geographical areas in Level 1 and a separate Level 2 proposal. However, to encourage broad-based participation and insure localized acceptance for outreach purposes, we encourage groups who plan on submitting a proposal addressing multiple Level 1 areas, to limit areas to no more than two adjacent tagging areas.

If research or tagging is to be conducted outside the current fishing regulations (e.g., minimum size and possession limits, closed seasons or areas, etc.), an Exempted Fishing Permit (EFP) or Letter of Authorization (LOA) may be required. If a waiver of Federal Regulations is proposed, time and location of the fishing or research activities, a list of specific regulations to be waived

and a brief justification for such a waiver must be included with the proposal. In addition, impacts of proposal exemptions must be analyzed to adhere to the regulations that govern the issuance of an EFP/LOA by NOAA Fisheries. If necessary, and as appropriate, NOAA Fisheries will consult with successful applicants to secure the information required for granting an exemption if issuance of an EFP or LOA is necessary.

To apply for an EFP or LOA, interested parties must submit an application to NOAA Fisheries at least sixty (60) days before the requested effective date. In such situations, applicants are strongly urged to contact the Sustainable Fisheries Division, (978) 281-9315 at the NOAA Fisheries- Northeast Regional Office, in advance of proposal submission. Applicants may access EFP/LOA application materials on the NOAA Fisheries web pages (<http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/600745.htm> or <http://www.nero.nmfs.gov/ro/doc/EFP.htm>).

Applicants should note that such authorization does not exempt vessels from any regulations implemented by any state or commonwealth. Accordingly, applicants are urged to contact the state fishery management agency to ascertain the need for any respective state clearances with regard to the proposed research.

(2) Cod Tagging Program Requirements: The objective of this program is to encourage cooperative research among fishery managers, scientists, and fishing community members in the implementation of localized cod tagging projects. Specific activities may vary with each tagging project, but all projects will require the following elements:

- Ensure that scientists and fishermen are involved in both the planning and the execution of the project.
- Provide administrative or other necessary support for the project, train and equip personnel in tagging techniques and onboard safety, and ensure adequate communication with NOAA Fisheries.
- Provide adequate insurance coverage for onboard vessel and research staff during all days of research cruises.
- Provide interim progress reports (semiannual), facilitate project evaluation through site visits, and submit a final report in accordance with a schedule negotiated with NOAA Fisheries. Final reports will be required to pass a critical review and incorporate modifications, as appropriate, based upon technical review comments. Additionally, final reports and data access portals will be posted on a cooperative research internet web site for public access.

D. PROPOSAL SUBMISSIONS: Level 1 and 2 cod tagging proposals must be received by close of business (4:30 PM) Friday, September 13, 2002. Submit one (1) original and one (1) copy of proposals to: Nick Anderson, NMFS/NER, One Blackburn Drive, Gloucester, MA 01930-2298. Facsimile proposals will not be accepted. Proposals will be reviewed by a technical review panel convened by NMFS. There will be separate evaluation criteria for each of the two Levels of proposals described above. Based on this review, NMFS may:

- (1) Invite the proposal author to enter into a negotiation and contracting agreement with the Cooperative Research Partners Initiative;
- (2) Recommend appropriate teaming arrangements and negotiate a partnership to conduct the tagging project;
- (3) Fund the proposal as a contract without modifications or negotiations; or
- (4) Choose not to fund the proposal.

Proposals shall include the following at a minimum, but are not limited to these elements. Proposals shall be limited to 12 pages for items 1-9 below. Item 10 submissions are not included in the page limitation.

1. Project Summary
2. Project goals and objectives
3. Collaborative value of project
4. Statement of work
 - a) Project design
 - b) Vessel and equipment needs
 - c) Personnel
 - i. personnel resources already available (identify persons involved in the development of the proposal)
 - ii. industry participation (tentative letters of commitment from fishermen, vessel owners, or other key industry participants)
5. List of equipment, facilities and infrastructure contributed by project participants or organizations as well as proof of insurance coverage and willingness of insurer to provide policy riders to cover additional personnel needed to conduct research.
6. Estimated time line of project including: a) start date, b) milestones, and c) completion date including submission of deliverables
7. Expected products and specific deliverables (at a minimum, this should include reports of activities and data products)
8. A description of all funding sources and funding needs to conduct project. The budget shall include a breakdown of costs, equipment, supplies, overhead, salaries, etc.
9. Contact information
10. Supporting documentation: Resumes, cooperative research agreements, contracts, etc.

E. PROPOSAL EVALUATION CRITERIA: Proposals will be reviewed and a score of 0 to 10 (10 being the highest achievable score) will be assigned to each factor listed below.

I. Research Value:

Level 1: Local Cod Tagging Infrastructure (seven factors)

To what degree does the proposal:

- demonstrate previous fish tagging experience?
- present details of on-board tagging protocols or procedures?
- present details of data collection and management experience and procedures?
- provide a list of existing or proposed collaborators or business relations for outreach and tagging operations?
- describe project evaluation methods? (i.e. what provisions are made by the proposer to evaluate the success or failure of the project in accomplishing its stated goals and documenting these results for him/herself and the government)
- describe implementation time lines and projects schedules?
- list applicants' facilities, equipment, and infrastructure proposed for this project?

Level 2: Central Coordination and Outreach (seven factors)

To what degree does the proposal:

- demonstrate previous outreach and business management experience?
- present details of data management and analysis experience?
- demonstrate internet connectivity and web page development?
- present details of proposed coordination among the local tagging groups, NEFSC, and the CRPI Director?
- describe project evaluation methods?(i.e. what provisions are made by the proposer to evaluate the success or failure of the project in accomplishing its stated goals and documenting these results for him/herself and the government)
- describe implementation timelines and projects schedules?
- list applicants' facilities, equipment, and infrastructure proposed for this project?

II. Collaborative value for both types: (five factors)

To what degree does the proposal:

- promote collaboration between fishermen and scientists?
- involve a strong research partnership with that is highly likely to succeed?
- involve a high degree of pro-active participation by fishermen in the design and conduct of the tagging project?
- provide compensation to fishermen?
- Address fishermen's interests or concerns?

F. ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA: All for-profit and non-profit institutions, State, local or tribal governments; educational institutions, institutions of higher education; and individuals are eligible to apply, provided that all BAA proposal requirements are satisfied and the proposal is received by September 13, 2002. NOAA Fisheries employees are not eligible to apply. Principal investigators who have previously funded research projects, under this cooperative initiative, must not be delinquent in progress or final reports.

G. ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: **ONE STAGE PROCESS:** In a departure from previous years, projects submitted in response to this Broad Agency Announcement (BAA) will be evaluated on the basis of one full proposal submission made in response to this solicitation. **NO SECONDARY CALL FOR FULL PROPOSALS BASED UPON PRELIMINARY PROPOSALS OR CONCEPT PAPERS WILL BE MADE.** Additionally, proposals are now due on the close of business (4:30 PM) instead of being postmarked on the due date.